

Public Works Committee
Minutes, Tuesday, June 7, 2011
Town Room, Town Hall

Attending---

Committee: Steve Braun (Chair), Don George, Christine Gray-Mullen, Charlie Moran, Guilford Mooring (Superintendent), Aaron Hayden (Select Board). Not present: Mike Cann.

1. Administrative

Minutes of the May 3 meeting approved 4-0 (one absent)
Next meeting dates: August 2; September 6.

2. Project updates from the Superintendent

Public Works has been busy with the capital-funded road projects. Guilford Mooring explained the relationship between kinds of work done and funding sources. Public Works gets funding from the Town as part of the municipal budget, and from capital projects—e.g. bonds, Chapter 90 funds, Town capital funds, block grants. All capital projects have to be done in good weather. Given past reductions in funding for Public Works, the Superintendent has fewer people to do the work; this means that all available personnel must work on the capital projects in spring-summer-fall, and maintenance is on hold during this time.

Because maintenance must be on hold during the construction season, lots of important work does not get done—e.g. pothole repair, crack sealing, light road maintenance and repair. We can expect complaints, as residents will see major road projects underway but their potholes still unfilled. We have 115 pothole damage claims at present, and more on the way. Northampton has 12.

Ideally, Public Works would have two crews, one for capital projects and one for maintenance. This would require a budget increase from the Town of about \$60,000.

Related to this, the Committee discussed taking a larger role in the Town, perhaps moving into education and advocacy. The Department of Public Works now has no Town group to advocate for it, and unlike Fire and Police, its work is largely invisible. The Committee discussed two possible moves: the public presentation of the Committee's report at Town Meeting; and an informational page on the web site.

3. Old Business

a) Update on subcommittee (Moran and Gray-Mullen) formed to interface with consultant charged with review of Town roadways. The full committee that will work as a liaison with the consultant will consist of six members: Mr. Moran and Ms Gray-Mullen, two members of the Planning Board, and two from the Public Transportation Committee. The full liaison

Committee is still being formed. Once in place, it will develop an RFP and begin the process of selecting a consultant.

b) Continuing discussion of funding strategies for storm water management (pros and cons). Charlie Moran argued for establishing a storm water utility; Christine Gray-Mullen and Don George argued against. The clinching argument was that for water and sewer utilities and fees there is something measurable delivered, whereas for storm water the 'something' delivered is difficult to measure. Further, the Town has no industrial base and a small commercial base, and these, in other towns and municipalities, are the major sources of revenue from a storm water fee. For Amherst, a \$10/residence fee would realize about \$16,000, and the administration of the fee, with associated abatements and modifications, would require substantial administrative time. Finally, Massachusetts towns and municipalities that have created storm water utilities have been forced to do so by the EPA. Amherst is not yet in that position.

Moved: The PWC feels that establishing a Storm Water Utility in Amherst at this time is premature. In the future, if EPA includes the Town in Phase 2 of its National Pollution Discharge Elimination System program, this step may become desirable and even necessary.

Approved: 4-0.

4. New Business:

The PWC report for the 2011 Town Report will be due this September.